

**California Department of Fish and Game Black Bear Management Program**  
**<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/bear/index.htm>**

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are recognized as an important component of California's ecosystems and as a valuable resource for the people of California. The black bear has been classified as a game mammal since 1948. Since that time, hunting regulations have become more restrictive, prohibiting trapping, killing of cubs or sows with cubs, and reducing the bag limit from two to one bear per license year. Before the early 1980's, regulation changes were infrequent. However, in 1982, the Department began recommending regulatory and legislative changes to reduce poaching and increase the Department's ability to monitor bear populations.

Data indicates that California's bear population has increased in recent years. Black bears are being observed in areas where they were not seen 50 years ago along the Central Coast and Transverse mountain ranges of Southern California. Between 25,000 and 30,000 black bears are now estimated to occupy 52,000 square miles in California.

Section 1801 of the Fish and Game Code establishes state policy regarding wildlife resources. The ultimate goal of this policy is to maintain sufficient wildlife populations (including black bear) to accomplish the following goals:

- a) to provide for the beneficial use and enjoyment of wildlife by all citizens of the state;
- b) to perpetuate all species for their intrinsic and ecological values;
- c) to provide for aesthetic, educational, and nonappropriative uses;
- d) to maintain diversified recreational uses of wildlife including sport hunting;
- e) to provide for economic contributions to the citizens of the state through the recognition that wildlife is a renewable resource, and;
- f) to alleviate economic losses or public health and safety problems caused by wildlife.

The primary goal of the Department's black bear management program is to maintain a viable and healthy black bear population. Biologists at the Department of Fish and Game closely monitor the state's black bear population by collecting teeth from hunter killed bears. The rings in the teeth are counted to determine the age of the bear. Because over-exploited populations are younger than populations with low mortality rates, monitoring the median age in a population gives biologists the information necessary to maintain healthy numbers within a population. Biologists also monitor the number of depredation permits to determine the relative abundance of bears where they encounter people. This is all coordinated on a statewide level through the Department's Bear Management Program.